

WEST LONDON MISSION
ALCOHOLIC REHABILITATION CENTRE

SAINT LUKE'S HOUSE

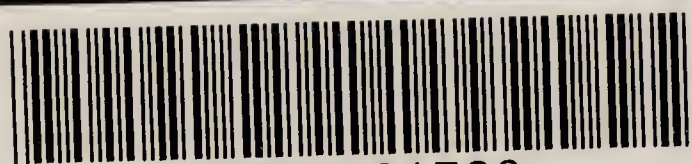
SAINT MARY'S HOUSE

LONDON ALCOHOLISM
INFORMATION CENTRE

25a WINCOTT STREET,
LONDON, S.E.11

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ANNUAL REPORT 1967



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HOUSE COMMITTEE

The Reverend The Lord Soper, M.A., PH.D. (*Chairman*)
Dr. Philip Bagwell (*Treasurer*)
Sister Kathleen Burgess
Mr. A. R. Dobson
Mr. Frederick Jones
Dr. Basil Merriman
Dr. Julius Merry
Col. P. Perfect
Mr. Barry Richards
Mr. G. D. Robson
Mr. C. W. Shaddick, (G.L.C.)
Dr. A. B. Stewart (Medical Officer of Health G.L.C.)
Mr. Barry Swinney, M.B.E.
Miss Margaret Wadsworth

WARDEN, ST. LUKE'S HOUSE

Reverend Arnold Whitehead, B.D.

WARDEN ST. MARY'S HOUSE

Miss Kathleen B. Saunders

Telephone numbers:

St. Luke's House	01-735 3565
St. Mary's House	01-735 8665
Information Centre	01-735 0456



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FOREWORD

THIS IS THE SEVENTH FOREWORD that it has been my privilege to write about this piece of essential social work. Perhaps I can say rather more easily than the wardens how successful this year has been, and how much of that success has been due to their faithfulness and competence, and the similar devotion of the members of the staff.

The facts about alcoholism in the community become more significant and indeed more alarming year by year. Alcoholism is a major social disease in many western countries, and not least in Great Britain. Alongside the evil of alcoholism can be put the much more optimistic comment that the problem itself is attracting more scientific attention, more responsible public feeling, and more specific enterprises and efforts to meet it.

What you will read in the Report is one concrete piece of evidence in support of these claims. I commend it to you. It speaks for itself. It speaks eloquently—above all it speaks in love.

SOPER

CONSOLIDATION AND ADVANCE

CHANGE FOR THE SAKE OF CHANGE is futile and tiring, but change which is dictated by new needs and growing insight is a sign of life. Here we describe the way in which the purposes of these Centres are being fulfilled, and some of the changes that have taken place in them over the last year.

1. The Information Centre, though now more than a year old, has been finding its feet this year and discovering its role. Enquiries have been brisk, and the demand steady. Letters and visitors come from all over London, and often from the provinces and overseas. Not the least of its tasks is that of supplying information about alcoholism to a large and growing number of students who are making a special study of the disease in college and university. And it is seldom that a day goes by without at least two alcoholics or their families coming for advice and counsel. A fuller report is found elsewhere.

2. All workers in the field of alcoholism are unanimous in their belief that the most fruitful method of treatment is through groups. Though we at the Centre are not organised entirely on the groups principle, there has been a marked increase this year in the number of groups that meet. Each month an A.A. speaker leads a group, and also each month we invite a specialist speaker to address a group. In addition every Wednesday the residents themselves meet in a very informal way to discuss their hopes and fears. All these activities are voluntary, but most people take part in one meeting or another. We feel that this is a step in the right direction.

3. Quite a lot of co-operation has been given to people engaged in research into various aspects of alcoholism. In some cases this has taken the form of interviewing the residents for the purpose of statistics. In others the residents have volunteered to take various medicines which have been found useful in the treatment of alcoholism.

The men have co-operated very willingly, especially since they have felt that the experiments may go towards helping others with the same problem as themselves

4. A very useful link has been strengthened with the Ministry of Social Security Reception Centre. This is a two-way co-operation whereby men waiting to come into St. Luke's can be accommodated whilst waiting, and we on our part, receive from the Reception Centre men who are suitable for rehabilitation. This has been happening for some time, but is now much more organised and effective.

5. On the more mundane level, a great deal of painting and maintenance of the premises has been done. The largest job has been the complete refitting of the kitchen, and for this long awaited job we have to thank the King Edward Hospital Fund, which provided the necessary finance. The men themselves are playing an increasing part in beautifying and improving the premises.

6. The most exciting development of all is the acquisition of two houses for people who have passed through the Centre successfully, but feel in need of continued supportive environment. This will meet a long felt need, and will undoubtedly be a valuable contribution to the work. Since, at the time of writing this report, this new project has not got fully under way, a progress report cannot yet be made.

THE STAFF

WITHOUT AN ADEQUATE and competent staff, the work of the Centre would come quickly to a halt. They are the most important part of the organisation. Mr. Odbert is now in his fourth year at St. Luke's, Mr. Penny has almost completed his second, and Mr. Gorsuch and Mr. Nairn have started this year.

The staff at St. Mary's consists of Miss Saunders, who is in charge, with Miss Blantern and Mrs. Bradley as her assistants.

Since our last report Miss Bell has left to go nursing, Mrs. Emney has gone to work in another house for alcoholics, and Miss Osborne has retired from the work of the Information Centre. Mr. Turner spent some time at St. Luke's as an

assistant warden. Miss Blantern will shortly be leaving for Rhodesia.

We should like to remember Mrs. Storey, our cook, with Mrs. Sargent, Mrs. Cunningham and Mrs. McNally, our cleaners. We have been very well served by a number of the men who have worked for a time around the house. We are very fortunate indeed in staff in every department.

Mrs. Whitehead serves us excellently as part-time secretary.

And Mr. Tweed is invaluable in almost any capacity from telephonist to cook.

This may seem a large staff until it is remembered that the house goes on with its work right round the clock, and has done so every day for over six years.

HOW TO USE US

1. For general advice about alcoholism, for helping in dealing with a particular alcoholic, contact the Information Centre, at 25a Wincott Street, S.E.11, or ring 01-735 0456.

2. If you feel that the person concerned needs residential support, please contact either St. Luke's or St. Mary's House, supplying:

- a. Name and age of applicant.
- b. As full a background as possible, including any previous treatment and a social history.

We will then arrange an interview, unless for some reason the information indicates that the applicant is unsuitable.

In order to make the best use of our facilities and to prevent the Centre from becoming a convenient refuge for alcoholics who merely want a breathing space to get over the worst of their troubles, we ask those referring people to us:

To make sure that the applicant has somewhere to

sleep during the time his application is going through. (In emergency, the Reception Centre at Peckham is very helpful.)

To try to ensure that the applicant arrives at the interview sober.

To test by all means the intention of the applicant to make a prolonged effort at rehabilitation.

It is our experience in these matters that the person who is sincere and determined will not resent some discipline in this direction. If an applicant quibbles about the arrangements made for him, or is constantly demanding time and attention, or persists in drinking, then either he needs medical help, or he has not yet reached the point of sincerity.

When making a recommendation, please keep in mind the fact that out of the whole field of helping the alcoholic, we have chosen the task of fairly high standard residential support.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHENEVER VISITORS are shown round the house, or one of the staff talks about our work, we find certain questions being asked regularly. We feel that it would be helpful for the main section of our report to consist of the questions that are usually asked, along with the appropriate answers.

Unless otherwise indicated, the answers given apply to both St. Luke's and St. Mary's. There is a separate section that reports the work of the Information Centre.

Q. From what sources do you draw your residents?

A. Almost all the women come from treatment in hospital. Of the men, roughly one third come from hospital, another third are referred from probation officers, prison doctors and after-care workers, and the rest from various sources, the largest of which is the resettlement wing of the Ministry of Social Security Reception Centre.

Q. How does a person get accepted?

A. The person referring the applicant provides as full a report as possible on the applicant's background and former treatment. This is followed by an interview at which a member of the staff assesses the person's sincerity and motivation, as far as this can be done, and decides whether the applicant is suitable.

Q. What makes an applicant suitable or unsuitable?

A. A suitable person would be sober and dried out, fit for work, of reasonable intelligence, sound mind and adequate personality. He would normally be between 22-60 years. He would be well motivated towards sobriety and have a good chance of becoming a sound and useful member of society. Since this is virtually asking for the impossible, we often accept people who do not tally with this description. Unfortunately, alcoholism is sometimes accompanied by serious mental disorder or marked social rebellion, and we find that we cannot help much in these cases. To accept them would disorganise our work for the rest of the residents. This also applies to people addicted to drugs and to crude spirits.

Q. How many people can you accommodate?

A. The maximum is 36 men and 10 women.

Q. Do the residents work?

A. Yes. They work in a large variety of occupations outside the house, except for three who are employed on domestic duties.

Q. Do you find them jobs?

A. No. This has not yet been generally necessary. The Ministry of Labour, plus the residents' initiative, have always been sufficient to find employment.

Q. Do they pay rent?

A. Yes. £4.10s. per week for the men. Usually less for the women since their pay is smaller. The Ministry of Social Security help with the rent until the resident is established in a job.

Q. What is your method of therapy?

A. Personal interest in a man's welfare, and the general atmosphere of support and confidence that the house community gives. Talks, discussions, etc. all play their part. Our main aim is to restore self-respect and to encourage the residents to stand on their own feet and to help each other. Attendance at A.A. meetings is encouraged, and our people are helped to make links with family and the outside world. Medical and psychiatric treatment is available where necessary.

Q. What happens if a resident drinks?

A. We take it very seriously, because alcohol is highly dangerous to all the people in the house, and just a few drinks could start off a bout of compulsive drinking that might land the person back in hospital or prison. Often taking a drink leads to temporary expulsion from the house. For the person's sake, we cannot treat occasional drinking indulgently.

Q. How long do residents stay with you?

A. Unless they choose to leave of their own accord, or refuse to co-operate in their recovery, usually they stay from two to six months—longer in exceptional cases.

Q. What happens when they leave?

A. Some go home, some to living-in jobs, some to accommodation of their own choosing. At the time of writing, we are hoping to provide boarding accommodation for those who have nowhere else to go.

Q. Do you have much success?

A. Success is very difficult to assess, since in many cases we are not able to observe the long term results. Also the amount of success is largely governed by the severity of selection for admission. However, over a short period, almost everyone does very well. Over a long period the percentage of success falls away very steeply. To claim 20 per cent success over a long period would be rather optimistic.

Q. What happens to the people who do not succeed?

A. A few are given a second chance in the house. Unfortunately, for many of the others, the whole messy business of being a drinking alcoholic starts all over again. Happily, more

is being done for alcoholics, and people leaving here have a fairly good chance of being picked up and helped by other statutory or voluntary agencies eventually.

Q. How do you get your staff?

A. Sometimes people who are looking for a start in social work enquire whether we have a vacancy. At other times people in other branches of social work recommend a person to us. At other times we have to advertise. The present staff situation is reasonably stable, and the members are drawn from a wide and varied background. We do not generally insist on previous experience.

Q. Do you push religion?

A. No. We like to feel that we are practising 'religionless Christianity.' We do, however, all agree that the long term programme of recovery from alcoholism involves a change of spiritual attitude.

Q. How are you financed?

A. By rents, and donations. The inevitable deficit is shared by the West London Mission and the Greater London Council.

Q. How long have you been functioning?

A. Since June, 1961, for St. Luke's. August, 1963 for St. Mary's.

Q. How many people have you had in the house in that time?

A. In St. Luke's about 900 different people. In St. Mary's, 72.

Q. Have you a non-resident service?

A. Yes. Many people return to the house for a chat or a meal. The Information Centre is a non-resident service. We also hope to start a club this winter for residents and ex-residents.

Q. Do the men and women mix at all?

A. Meetings and discussions are attended by residents of both houses. They often attend the same A.A. meetings. Apart from this they lead separate lives.

Q. How many chances do you give a resident?

A. There is no fixed rule. It depends entirely on the person's need and previous response.

Q. How far do you co-operate with other agencies?

A. We endeavour, for the sake of our residents, to welcome help from any reputable source, and to give help wherever we can. The field in which we are working is too difficult to be complicated by rivalry or exclusiveness.

INFORMATION CENTRE

Demand for the services of the Information Centre continues to grow. Many requests for advice on treatment have been received following recent National publicity, particularly the full feature coverage given by the *Sunday Times* supplement.

Over the past year, more than 600 enquiries have been dealt with, either by telephone, letter or an actual interview.

New interviews average about ten per week, although each case may require up to four or five interviews to complete.

There has been a particularly significant increase in the requests for information from students engaged on projects in Alcoholism. These are now averaging fifteen per week.

In addition, lectures have been given at the Centre to parties of medical students, student nurses, probation officers and social workers.

One of the things that has been noticeable about the work of the Information Centre in the past months has been the number of professional people and their families which have sought out the Centre. This is a corrective to the impression that most alcoholics are down and out, and it has also widened our experience by allowing us to meet people over a wide social scale who suffer from the same disease.

THANKS

Financial

- To the Greater London Council for their interest, and for their generous support.
- To the Magistrates' Courts and to various individuals and bodies for their gifts and donations.
- To the Ministry of Social Security for their understanding and help to our men and women who come for assistance.
- To the Lambeth Mission and the W.V.S. for gifts of clothing.
- To Ruskingtons' Pies for their weekly gift of food.
- To the Metropolitan Hospital Fund for a grant towards the redecoration of St. Mary's.

Services

- To the House Committee for their interest and advice.
- To Dr. Marson for his care of the residents' health.
- To Dr. Merry for his frequent visits and help.
- To all Probation Officers and Social Workers for referring people to us, and for retaining interest in many after acceptance.
- To Father O'Brien for his visits to the Roman Catholic residents.
- To Miss Norma Sinclair and Mr. Michael French for their voluntary help on the switchboard each week.
- To the Kennington Police who, on the few occasions when it has been necessary, have cleared our door-step of aggressive visitors.
- To the officials of the Ministry of Labour, Keyworth House, for their help in finding employment for our residents.
- To Mr. M. B. Chapman, the representative to the House Committee from the G.L.C. and best wishes to him on retirement. We welcome his successor, Mr. C. W. Shaddick.
- To those people who have helped to make the House attractive by their gifts of plants and bulbs.

